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Territorial Policy Communities and Devolution in the United Kingdom

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Abstract

Devolution in the United Kingdom forms part of a wider process of spatial re-scaling across Europe. Little work has been done on its effect on interest articulation. The literature on policy communities treats them as sectoral in scope. We propose the concept of 'territorial policy communities' to designate territorially-bounded constellations of actors within and across policy sectors, emerging in response to the rescaling of government. Devolution may leave existing systems of interest articulation unchanged, leaving 'regions without regionalism'; it may confine some groups within territorial boundaries while allowing others freedom to choose between levels of government; or it might promote a general territorialization of interest representation and the emergence of territorial policy communities. The UK's four models of devolution help test the effects of stronger and weaker forms of devolution on the territorialization of groups.

Spatial rescaling and devolution

Modernization theory has long suggested that territory would give way to function as the basis for the division of labour, social differentiation and interest representation. For sociologists, the reasons were functional and linked to the emergence of industrial society. Durkheim (1964) and Deutsch (1966) argued that social evolution broke down territorial barriers to create integrated national societies, providing the basis for political order. Political scientists came to similar conclusions, albeit for more institutionalist reasons and privileging the state as the agent of assimilation. Stein Rokkan (Flora et al., 1999) demonstrated how states emerged through a process of boundary construction, enclosing political, social and economic systems and limiting the possibilities for individuals or groups to operate beyond national space. Unable to exit the national polity, representatives of social and political interests were forced to turn inwards, suppressing internal territorial differences and operating across national space. This fostered interaction, leading to national political bargaining and social compromises. Political science has since assumed that interest representation in European countries is state-wide. It assumes that sectoral and class interests take the same form everywhere, so that regional differences in the patterns of politics reflect the differential presence of sectoral or class interests within territories, rather than relating to territory itself. Social compromises, notably between capital and labour (mediated by the state) are struck at the national level. Social concertation or corporatism is a state-level phenomenon, depending on the existence of a state boundary preventing defection. The Keynesian welfare state was a form of positive-sum compromise depending on the existence of this boundary and a sense of shared identity and social solidarity.

This vision of interest intermediation has been challenged in recent debates on globalization, European integration, spatial rescaling, new regionalism and devolution. The functionalist

argument about national integration and boundaries is questioned by the rescaling of capitalist production at multiple levels, above, below and across states (Brenner, 2004; Brenner et al., 2003; McLeod, 2001). New regionalism posits the rise of territorial production systems at various scales (Scott, 1998; Storper, 1997; Cooke and Morgan, 1998; Crouch et al., 2001). Institutional analysis has similarly drawn attention to shifting scales of government, at the European, transnational and sub-state levels (Balme, 1996; Keating, 1998). Bartolini (2005) has discerned a partial reversal of the Rokkanian process of coincident boundary-building, as different policy systems assume different territorial boundaries, at the sub-state or supranational levels.

There is little empirical work on the effects of spatial rescaling on interest articulation and representation. The new regionalism literature does not clearly identify institutions or patterns of political exchange. Some versions highlight the prospects for new positive-sum social compromises. Cooke and Morgan (1998) argue that, at the appropriate level, new forms of social partnership may enhance productive efficiency and secure social integration, though Lovering (1999) criticizes this as wishful thinking. Another literature largely ignores institutions and interests, instead emphasising how the culture and 'social capital' of territorial societies determines their capacity for collective action. Putnam (1993) makes little effort to establish the link between social attitudes and policy outcomes and merely asserts that 'social capital' can enhance both economic output and democratic performance, with nothing on the role of capital and labour or social conflict. 'Multilevel governance' approaches, though addressing rescaled systems of policy-making, conceptualize actors as individuals or organizations, not representatives of social interests (Hooghe and Marks, 2001; Bache and Flinders, 2004). Levels refers to organizational boundaries and there is no concept of territory as found in social geography or the new regionalism.

Bartolini (2005), from an institutionalist perspective, addresses the issue of social compromises and interaction, arguing that the selective opening of boundaries of policy systems allows certain groups a 'partial exit', enabling them to opt out of exchange, compromise and solidarity. This recalls earlier arguments in urban political economy that emphasize the mobility of capital, which gives it a privileged place in city politics compared with territorially-rooted groups (Peterson, 1985; Kantor, 1995; Keating, 1991). The regulation of different policy fields at different levels challenges the old social compromises of the state. The privileged and mobile, including owners of capital, may be able to delink themselves from co-citizens, either by moving physically or 'venue-shopping' (Baumgartner and Jones, 1991). This contrasts with the new regionalism, which sees the possibilities for a new, positive-sum, compromise at the regional level.

Devolution can be seen as a response to these processes of restructuring, though European states have had different motivations for doing so. There is the need for administrative modernization and public services rationing. New models of regional development, promoted by academics and the European Commission, emphasize the advantages of decentralized delivery. There are bottom-up pressures from regions and stateless nations engaged in new forms of polity-building, leading to the emergence of a regional or meso level of government (Sharpe, 1993). This creates new spaces for interest articulation and representation. Compared with nation-states, however, regions are weakly-bounded communities. Devolution may be aimed at capturing the re-scaled

systems of economic and social change, but these are inherently open. It is relatively easy for some groups to opt-out of social compromise and operate at new levels but this is variable and depends on the design of the institutions. In some cases, regional devolution takes a functionally-based form consisting of economic development agencies. In others, it is more political with wider competences, and draws in a broader range of actors. In some instances, there is no interest group activity at all. Pastori (1971) and Trigilia (1991), writing about the Italian regional governments established in the 1970s, spoke of 'regions without regionalism' and 'the paradox of the regions', meaning that regional government had not been matched by regional civil societies or interest groups.

Territorial Policy Communities

The public policy literature has spawned a plethora of concepts to analyse patterns of interest articulation, interaction and competition within policy systems. Some merely map the field. Ostrom (1999) uses the term 'action areas' to trace the participants, positions, outcomes, action-outcome linkages, information and costs. A related concept is the 'policy network', involving government officials, politicians, experts or lobbyists in a policy domain. Beyond this are approaches that theorize the relationships among actors. The 'policy community' suggests a degree of consensus and coherence among actors (Richardson and Jordan, 1979; Rhodes, 1981; Wright and Wilks, 1987; Rhodes and Marsh, 1992; Marsh and Smith, 2000). A related French concept is the *référentiel* (Jobert and Muller, 1987) – a common set of assumptions, frame of reference and appreciation of issues. The 'advocacy coalition' is a constellation of actors within a policy domain sharing values and interests and perceptions of problems and solutions (Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). The debate has been prey to semantic arguments in which the definition of terms has become more important than the substantive questions (Dowding, 1995, 2001; Marsh and Smith, 2000). Yet we can discern two issues. The first is structural – the delineation of the policy sub-system and identification of actors and their relationships. The second is behavioural – actor strategy, the degree of cohesiveness or consensus and shared norms among actors. We propose to use the term 'policy community' to refer to the first, and treat the questions raised in the second as variables.

Policy communities are normally presented as sectoral, although some have hinted that they may be territorial or trans-territorial (Rhodes and Marsh, 1992; Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith, 1999). Our aim is to examine the impact of spatial rescaling and we propose the concept 'territorial policy community'. This may be a territorially-confined sectoral community; or it may be a cross-sectoral policy community organized around territorial interests. There is no inherent contradiction between territory and sector as a basis for interest articulation; becoming more territorial does not imply a diminution of sectoral identification. Rather, these dimensions are combined in different ways over time. We pose two questions. The first is whether territorial policy communities have emerged. The second relates to their characteristics, including their degree of cohesiveness, shared norms, shared conceptions of territory, and interactions at the territorial level.

Broadly speaking, there are three possible consequences of devolution. One is no change ('regions without regionalism') as traditional functional divisions bounded by the nation-state predominate. A second is a partial exit, as selected groups delink themselves from others and venue-shop for favourable treatment. A third is 'new regionalism', in which new policy

communities emerge at the new spatial level. To assess this, we examined a number of dimensions of change among interest groups:

Organizational change. The extent to which groups change their structures to deal with new levels of government.

Focus. The main orientation of groups and where they see their main interlocutors.

Cognitive frames. This is more subtle and less easily operationalized, but broadly refers to the perspective from which a group regards policy issues (sub-state, state, supra-national or local), the expression of a territorial identity, and the existence of shared norms, values and interests.

Interaction. The extent to which groups interact with each other at the same territorial level within and across policy domains,

Lobbying. This is a more traditional mode of territorial politics in which groups come together in defence of a shared territorial interest

Our hypotheses are as follows:

1. The stronger the form of government devolution, then (a) the more devolution interest groups will introduce in their own structures; and (b) the stronger the new boundary; more groups will be locked in, closing off possibilities of partial exit and venue-shopping.
2. This will lead to a cognitive change, in which issues are defined within a new territorial perspective, and territorial political communities gain legitimacy.
3. This will produce more group interaction and a widening of the regional policy agenda.
4. At the limit one might find forms of social concertation or meso-level corporatism (although, given the times and the weakness of the institutions, this would not be pronounced).
5. Yet, groups that have previously been able to co-operate in territorial lobbies will now become competitors in the new policy arena, causing strains and difficulties in adaptation.
6. The emerging communities will be marked by historic legacies; groups opposed to devolution will be slower to respond.

Cases and Method

In the UK we have four distinct models of devolution and, *prima facie*, quite different forms of territorialized interest politics. This allows us to make a controlled comparison within a single state. In Scotland, there is a Parliament with legislative competences over all matters not expressly reserved, a Government (formerly Executive) and a substantial civil service. In Wales, there has been only administrative devolution over specified areas of policy, although this has changed since the Government of Wales Act, 2006. In North East England, there has been a weaker form of functional devolution, with a Regional Development Agency and indirectly-elected Regional Assembly, with rather limited competences around economic development and planning. Northern Ireland (NI), which has had a prolonged period of direct rule from Westminster, has a potentially stronger system than Wales. But it has been slow in developing and the territorial dimension of policy-making is hampered by community division.

We have conducted some 300 interviews with interest group representatives since 1999. The most complete information is available for Scotland, where interviews were conducted in 1999-

2000, 2003-4 and 2006. This does not include interviews conducted in the early 1980s, which provided background for the pre-devolution years (Keating and Midwinter, 1983). Interviews were conducted in the Northern region of England between 2000 and 2003, Wales in 2005 and Northern Ireland in 2006-8. This does not give us a perfect before-and-after set of interviews for each case. Interviews in Northern Ireland coincided with moves back to devolution on the basis of power-sharing institutions, but instability made it difficult to get useful information before 2006. In Northern England, the process was halted by the failure of the devolution referendum in 2004.

We can divide groups into: purely territorial; territorial groups affiliated to UK/British groups; territorial branches of UK/British groups; and purely British/UK groups. The sectors covered are: business; trade unions; education; health; other professions; and the voluntary sector. Examining business and trade unions enabled us to assess the extent of adaptation of economic representation and patterns of traditional class politics. The voluntary sector is included to assess the degree of openness of the new policy systems to non-producer interests, promised in the name of 'new politics' (McGarvey and Cairney, 2008: 11). The professions are important actors, since public services are among the most important tasks of devolved government and there is strong evidence of different models of delivery since devolution (Keating, 2005; Greer, 2004). In each case, we examined the pre-devolution networks and organizational change; the focus of activity; cognitive frames; and interactions. Organizational change was assessed by asking group representatives about their relationships with the various levels of government, municipal, devolved, UK and European. Focus of activity was determined by asking groups about which levels of government they were most engaged with. We assessed cognitive change by posing questions about policy issues and seeing whether respondents answered using a purely sectoral or a territorial frame of reference. Interactions were measured by asking group representatives about their relations with other groups and triangulating the responses by those of the other groups concerned.

Scotland

Organizational change

Before devolution, Scotland had its own interest groups, mostly independent or branches of UK groups (Kellas, 1989). During the twentieth century business and unions consolidated at the UK level, but the growing competences of the Scottish Office produced a need for a Scottish presence from mid-century. Education and agriculture had independent Scottish groups as did most of the voluntary sector. The medical professions were organized on a UK basis, although two of the Royal Colleges are located in Scotland. While there was consensus on a shared Scottish lobby across sectoral, class and party divisions, political devolution was long a divisive issue. Big business feared left-wing dominance and threats to the UK single market, but by the mid-1990s, had retreated to sceptical neutrality (Lynch, 1998). Since the late 1960s trade unions tended to devolution, but with guarantees for the unified British welfare state, labour market and economic management (Keating and Bleiman, 1979). The voluntary sector and new social movements saw a Scottish Parliament as a means of increasing their access to government. Few new groups emerged in response to devolution but activity has been rationalized, with a clearer distinction between UK and Scottish matters and some enhanced policy capacity at the Scottish level. Groups generally have autonomy in policy matters devolved to Scotland.

Focus

Big business remains largely UK-focused, and can by-pass Scottish levels of government on issues of macro-economic policy and regulation. Yet it is interested in devolved matters such as infrastructure, education and training. In the early days of devolution, big business was distant from the new institutions but, as the Scottish Government emphasized economic growth, was drawn into the policy networks. This presented a challenge to a rather fragmented system of representation (Raco, 2003). By 2007 the big business lobby had firm links with the Scottish Government and these were not affected by the change of party government that year. Small business, more dependent on public goods provided at the Scottish level, was more enthusiastic from the start.

Agriculture is cross-pressured since the field is almost completely devolved, yet subject to European policy which is negotiated through the UK government. Devolution has reduced Scottish farmers' contacts with the UK department and they work closely through the Scottish Government. They also operate in Brussels, sharing an office with English farmers. Large estates, like big business, are increasingly owned by multinationals. The Scottish Rural Property and Business Association has abandoned its old protectionism and become more active at the Scottish level.

Trade unions have historically had a local and UK orientation. They are mostly organized on a UK basis but affiliated to the separate Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC). Labour regulation is a largely reserved matter and there is a tendency now to leave this to the UK-level of unions. But training policy and responsibility for local development are devolved, so the unions are drawn into the Scottish networks. They are also concerned with social issues and public sector employment, giving them a stronger orientation than employers to the Scottish networks.

The medical professions have become an important part of the Scottish policy community. While the British Medical Association (BMA) operates across the UK, the Royal College of Surgeons of England does not. Rather, the Colleges in Scotland contribute to reserved medical training and standards issues. Primary and secondary education in Scotland has always been distinct, with its own networks. Higher education is almost entirely devolved and policy has begun to diverge, but the Research Assessment Exercise remains UK-wide (Keating, 2005b). Consequently, universities need to access the Scottish policy networks while staying UK-focussed for fear of isolation. Professional organizations in social work, housing and town planning are organized on a UK-wide basis but devolution has forced Scottish divisions to acquire more policy capacity.

The voluntary sector consists largely of Scottish groups or autonomous branches of UK bodies. The Scottish Council of Voluntary Organizations (SCVO) found in 1997 that its members were overwhelming pro-devolution, seeing it as an opportunity to break the hold of political parties, local government and the civil service (McGarvey and Cairney, 2008). A Scottish Compact with the voluntary sector was signed by the Labour Government before devolution and renewed in 2004, though a certain disillusion has since set in due to Scottish Government inattention (Maxwell, 2007). Local government remains a rival in the control of services and resources and strongly insists on its representative credentials. Trade unions, while supportive of volunteering

in principle, are wary that it might be used to substitute for full-time jobs and are strongly attached to traditional modes of service delivery.

European issues and networks appeared less salient than expected. Groups tended to leave European matters to their UK counterparts or to pan-European groups, although Scotland Europa in Brussels is used to pursue specifically Scottish issues. There is a general acceptance of European integration as beneficial to Scotland, although opinions on the single currency are divided along similar lines to England and Wales.

Cognitive frames and shared values

Scottish identity is so widely shared within Scotland (McCrone, 2001) that it does not provide a discriminating factor among groups. The meaning and implications, however, are contested. At one time identity could be confined to the cultural realm, without clear implications for politics or socio-economic representation. This has become more difficult since the 1960s and especially since devolution. Institutional change has strengthened an existing Scottish frame of reference. There is a shared emotive commitment to the idea of Scotland and the promotion of Scottish interests. There is a concern to establish the legitimacy of Scottish groups, reflected in support for symbolic matters like Scottish bank notes. No respondent questioned the legitimacy of the Scottish Parliament, yet groups are reluctant to confine themselves to the Scottish arena, fearing marginalization from the big UK issues.

Scottish attitudes are fairly close to the UK average, despite the Scottish egalitarian myth of a stronger commitment to the welfare state, collectivism and equality (Rosie and Bond, 2007). Further, the dominant stereotypes can be given very different policy implications and there is also a right-wing Scottish story in which egalitarianism is the basis for meritocracy and anti-socialism (Reicher and Hopkins, 2001). Respondents were prone to cite these stereotypes and the shared Scottish perspective meant that all groups have to pay attention to issues of social inclusion as well as economic competition (although we have not found evidence of a distinct Scottish capitalism). A similar story can be told about Europe. Scottish electors are slightly less Euro-sceptic than English ones (McCrone, 2006) but there is a strong elite consensus in favour of Europe. This is tied to the territorial frame of reference, the perception of Scotland as a 'European region' and an object of European policy.

Interaction

There is some lock-in as groups must address each others' concerns and cannot opt out of Scottish politics as easily as in the past. So business groups will accept the legitimacy of the Scottish Government's social inclusion strategy, while unions and social interest groups will accept the need for economic competitiveness. There is less evidence of old class conflicts than we found in North East England.

There is a distinct Scottish policy-making style involving consultation and working through professional networks and the usual story of everybody knowing everybody else. The Scottish Government is descended directly from the Scottish Office, which had little policy-making capacity since its main task was to implement Whitehall policies. The Government relies on policy-making networks and professional groups more than the UK government. It has also been

committed to consultation and this has encouraged groups to strengthen their Scottish level of organization.

On the other hand, devolution has politicized the policy process, introduced new actors, and forced actors to face conflicts of interest and competition for resources, displacing conflict to the outside. Scottish politics before 1999 revolved around lobbying the centre. Groups combined to promote a shared Scottish interest on matters like public spending or industrial closures. Now they compete and must come up with their own policy ideas. As a consequence of the move from the politics of managed dependency to autonomy, the village story about consensualism will no longer serve its purpose. Overall, while no group or sector can completely opt out of the Scottish policy community, different groups are oriented differently and opportunities for partial exit exist, especially in the business community. There is evidence of more inter-sectoral and cross-class dialogue and consultation than in the past. So there has been a rebuilding of policy communities in Scotland after devolution, but it has been limited.

Wales

Organizational change

Before devolution, Wales had few independent interest groups or strong arms of UK groups. This resulted from the greater administrative integration of Wales with England, the lack of pre-union organisations, the weaker development of the Welsh Office and the cross-border flows of people and services. Opinions on devolution were divided, with business moving from hostility to passive resistance and unions and the voluntary sector being more favourable. The issue was not debated extensively in Wales as it was in Scotland and there was little preparation before 1999.

Since devolution, business groups have modestly strengthened their Welsh branches. The Wales Trades Union Congress (WTUC) has gained one staff member but remains a branch of the British TUC and not all unions have an all-Wales level (Pike et al., 2006). The voluntary sector has responded more strongly, forming umbrella groups such as Learning Disability Wales (from local bodies) to complement the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVO). Professional bodies tend to be UK-based. There is no major separate teaching union, and the Association of University Teachers did not have a presence in Wales until it merged with the National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education (NATFHE) to form the University and College Union (UCU). Wales never had royal colleges of medicine, although the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) encouraged the development of an Academy of Medical Royal Colleges in Wales to provide a Welsh focus and policy advice. Although the Royal College of Nursing has a federal structure, it struggled to adapt to devolution. The British Medical Association (BMA) was also slow to develop capacity. Overall, Welsh interest groups remain under-resourced and dependent on London-based bodies for policy advice.

Focus

Welsh business interests focus mainly on the UK and tend to oppose policy divergence. The lack of legislative devolution means that much policy-making remains in Whitehall. Groups insist on a unified UK market and business regulation, although territorial lobbying invites mild protectionism and more local government procurement. Business was rather disengaged during the first term but galvanized by opposition to the proposal to incorporate the Welsh Development

Agency in the Welsh Assembly Government. The main constraint on Welsh involvement remains lack of capacity.

Agriculture is locally owned and operated. The National Farmers Union has a Welsh office which focuses on the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG), reflecting different conditions (a greater reliance on livestock) and an incremental devolution of powers to Wales since 1999. However, the Europeanization of policy often produces a common UK interest. The National Farmers' Union (NFU) in Wales maintains few direct links to Whitehall. Rather, it lobbies through the WAG and NFU in England. There is also a separate farming union – the Farming Union of Wales – which supported devolution and supports greater powers for the National Assembly for Wales.

Trade unions support devolution but also UK-wide pay bargaining and regulation. Welsh branches of unions and Wales Trade Union Congress (WTUC) have little direct contact with Whitehall; they feed into UK policy through the TUC and National Assembly. Welsh trade unionists have close relationships with Labour Ministers in the Welsh Assembly Government, and there is a Memorandum of Understanding based on the Scottish Concordat (Pike et al., 2006).

The health professions are part of a distinct policy community drawing on local authorities to maintain a broad public health agenda. However, a cross-border flow of patients and staff keeps England comparisons high on the agenda. The main focus of teaching unions is the significantly diverging policy agenda, although teacher pay is still negotiated UK-wide. The National Union of Teachers supports Welsh policy and devolution gave it the opportunity to influence policy that it lost in Whitehall.

Higher Education Wales (HEW) forms part of Universities UK. However, HEW also has extensive links with the Welsh Assembly Government (and Higher Education and Funding Council Wales—HEFCW) which maintains its own policy community and has a reasonably distinct agenda. HEW tends to oppose policy differences which have a disproportionate effect on Welsh institutions (as with top-up fees) and to discourage inward looking policies.

Cognitive frames and shared values

Welsh national identity is less salient than Scottish (Jeffery, 2005), and more divided, between North and South and between English and Welsh speakers. While previously divisive, language has now been incorporated into a civic Welsh identity, with the Welsh Language Act of 1993 and further steps after devolution to mainstream the language. Elites follow this agenda, but there is a strong feeling among unions and business that the mainstreaming efforts should not enter the private sector. As in Scotland, institutional change has strengthened the territorial frame. There is a shared commitment to the promotion of Welsh interests and a strong pressure felt within groups to 'be Welsh'.

Despite communitarian myths and a social democratic approach, summed up in First Minister Rhodri Morgan's 'clear red water' speech, the 'story' about Wales cannot simply be read off public opinion. Welsh attitudes do not appear to be as left-wing as their Scottish and English counterparts and they are less egalitarian (Jones and Scully, 2004). There is a more pragmatic

source for this different frame of reference, based on different policy conditions such as geographyⁱ. Wales has a population of three million with no large cities, no conurbation and limited connections to roads and public transport. This limits English models based on provider choice. Instead, the focus is co-ordination and sharing.

Interaction

The combination of open access to decision-makers and the low capacity of groups suggests that the barriers to inclusion within policy communities are minimal. There is little evidence of old class conflicts and a tangible sense of pragmatism in working arrangements. Business organisations and the Welsh Trade Union Congress (WTUC) formed the *Social Partners Unit* to foster joint working and joint responses through the *Business Partnership Council* and the WTUC is represented on the Welsh Council of Voluntary Action's board.

Groups identify a 'Welsh Way' of consultation and 'partnership working' (Cairney, 2008). This derives from a combination of Wales' small size, a Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) desire to foster a sense of collective working, and a low policy capacity. The effect is an approach based on 'everyone round the table', which fosters more lock-in based on personal relationships. In the early years of devolution, this involved a regularity of interaction among groups from different sectors to a degree not witnessed in Scotland. Yet these relationships could be described as 'wide but not deep'. First, the partnership council meetings are often described by participants as 'talking shops' and there is low cross-sectoral interaction outwith these set piece events. Second, personal relationships are often developed with ministers rather than civil servants. Therefore, partnerships may be apparent in the principle but not the details of policy (and in some cases the principles are non-negotiable). This is an important qualification given the broad suspicion of most groups towards the perceived cosy relations between WAG and the Welsh Local Government Association.

The consultation style also exposes differences which may have been masked by bilateral negotiations, i.e., the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) can conduct useful meetings across the university sector while the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) cannot. Yet, given the agenda on rationalisation which accompanies funding decisions each university has an acute sense of winning or losing within these meetings. These tensions are magnified when groups are brought together, with businesses and colleges left feeling second-best to local authorities in their relations with ministers (Cairney, 2008).

A combination of cognitive frames and interaction can be summed-up by the phrase 'made in Wales'. This provides a strong driver for interaction related to 'policy ownership' (McEwen, 2005) and the sense of a close-knit Welsh 'family' (suggesting shared norms), based on the positive attitude of the WAG to interest groups. Yet, this is undermined by the uneven balance of power between groups. Groups have found the transition from lobbyists to competing policy influentials difficult.

North East England

Organizational change

The North East of England has some territorial identity, including a distinct dialect, a labour-dominated political culture, a certain anti-southern sentiment, and some sense of shared history

(Tomaney, 1999, 2000a, b). However, it has largely been created through public policy since the 1930s and as a standard region since the 1960s. There have not been separate interest groups but business, unions and social interest groups have established regional presences in response to economic decline and successive government plans for the region and there was some collaboration in the pursuit of inward investment.

After 1997 the regional development agency, One North East, was built on existing agencies. A Regional Assembly drew on local government representatives and nominees of business, labour and social organizations, with the task of deliberating regional strategies and priorities. However, English Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were to be business-led and not responsible to the assemblies. A Government Office for the region existed since the 1990s to co-ordinate central government regeneration policies. A loosely Labour-led movement for elected regional government was taken forward on a cross-party basis by a Constitutional Convention (Tomaney, 2000a, b), and a referendum was held in 2004. The failure of the referendum leaves a range of independent agencies without any central forum or authoritative decision-maker.

The establishment of the RDA and Regional Assembly has led to some organizational change, especially among groups concerned with economic development. The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has strengthened its regional level, and a North East Chamber of Commerce was established in Durham. A Northern Business Forum aims to bring business interests together, although there is internal tension and the small business sector has not always been welcome (Dixon, 2006). The Trades Union Congress (TUC) has modestly strengthened its regional organization. Some voluntary groups have also set up regional machinery, although this is less extensive. On the other hand, the Government Office for the region lost some powers and remains separate from the development agency (Mawson and Hall, 2000).

Focus

In the absence of significant regional government, groups still operate within UK or English sectoral policy frameworks. Business groups take their lead from London, and focus their lobbying on central government as do trade unions. Voluntary organizations are often tied into local government programmes or operate at the local level. New networks have formed around issues of development but have not taken on a life of their own and are not binding, so partners can exit at any time. Participation is guided largely by instrumental considerations rather than territorial loyalty, reflected in the divisions of the nominated Regional Assembly. Business organizations are sceptical, seeing it as little more than a talking shop, or a way of hamstringing the Regional Development Agency. Regionalists from the unions and academia were more supportive, but were concerned with the presence and localist orientation of old Labour politicians. Representatives of the voluntary sector and social groups supported the Assembly, since it gave them a forum for the first time, but were frustrated at the lack of powers. These attitudes spilled over into the debate about regional government. Business opposed political devolution, preferring the existing functionally specific model, in which they have a guaranteed independent role. They fear that a regional government would be dominated by the left, whether old Labour politicians or new regionalists committed to social inclusion and sustainable development.

Institutional change has thus strengthened the North East as a framework for interest articulation, but this is stronger in some sectors than in others. The Regional Assembly provides an outlet for voices that previously were not heard and encourages them to operate at the regional level, but this representation is separated from the hard decisions made in the Regional Development Agency. The weakness of the regional level means that strong groups can choose whether to use it. With this exit option, they are not forced into a social dialogue or into policy compromises.

Cognitive frames

Organizational change has strengthened the North East region as a frame of reference, although groups use different boundaries and some do not see the region as salient. The Regional Development Agency (RDA) is focused on economic development and planning, so the region features mainly as a framework for development policy and infrastructure planning. There is wide agreement that effective development needs a regional approach, with co-ordinated efforts in infrastructure provision, business promotion and training. The RDA has become an accepted part of the institutional landscape and all groups wanted to keep it. Groups also shared a concern with manufacturing industry and its neglect by governments dependent on votes in the south, as well as a marked resentment of Scottish advantages in public spending. Menu (2008) found economic actors, in business and the development agency, stressing the importance of territorial loyalty, the virtues of the workforce and the need to valorize the industrial tradition of the region. They also emphasized the small size of the region and the ease of communication as well as competition with Scotland. Yet there are sharp divisions within the region and a national framework prevails. Territorial identity is weak and there is no broader conception of common political space, no shared narratives of the region. Nor did we find a strong European dimension in the vision of regional actors, except in relation to Structural Fund resources.

Interaction

There is a strong sense of regional economic interest and of an economic development community. Business and trade unions share much of the same productivist orientation, stressing investment and jobs. This does not, however, produce a shared societal or political project for the region. It can bring them into conflict with environmental groups and voluntary groups who stress issues of sustainable development, social justice and redistribution. Within the dominant political party, Labour, there is a strong localism, a focus on the politics of distribution and clientelism and a suspicion of regionalism. Some of the trade unions, notably Unison, have a broader vision, encompassing both economic and social issues and this, together with the voluntary sector and some academics, provided the basis for the regional government movement. Yet the failure of the move beyond functional regionalism ensured that groups are not locked into a common regional political system.

Northern Ireland

Organizational change

Despite the experience of the Stormont regime (1921-72) Northern Irish interest groups were more strongly integrated with those in England than their Scotland counterparts. Some, however, were divided on sectarian lines while others were divided between UK and all-Ireland bodies; this is the case notably with trade unions. Education is divided into several sectors – primarily the state-controlled (Protestant) school sector and the Catholic-maintained sector which both have employing authorities, in addition to integrated schooling and the Irish language schools.

There are five teaching unions representing different sectors. The business community is represented as a whole but agriculture is divided on sectarian lines.

Under direct rule, groups needed a strong presence in London to lobby ministers and MPs. This encouraged organisational centralization, and ensured that local presence on the ground was minimal. London-based staff produced campaign literature and responded to consultations in Belfast, eased by Northern Irish replication of English policy models.

Devolution has required branches of UK-wide organisations to reorient their activities. The business sector has diverted resources to Northern Ireland (NI). The Federation of Small Businesses established a new Policy Unit in Belfast. Agricultural bodies, divided along structural and religious cleavages, expanded their lobbying portfolios to influence devolved policies and created new institutional machinery to coordinate cross-border agricultural policy. NI branches of UK trade unions, such as UNISON (the public service union) and the National Association of Schoolmasters Union of Women Teachers (NASUWT), were given more organisational autonomy and resources. Professional associations also strengthened their presence, by creating new NI-based positions or setting up new branches, though these remain small, under-resourced and have had difficulty in responding to consultations. Voluntary groups have historically had a strong local presence and insider status in NI; but those operating UK-wide, such as Help the Aged, have needed to step up their policy presence to compete for access to government.

Focus

The contested nature of NI has always made it difficult to sustain a strong territorial focus among groups. Since the Good Friday Agreement, there is a new reference point but also a continuing UK and an augmented all-Ireland perspective.

The business sector has always been strongly focussed on Northern Ireland. During the Troublesⁱⁱ, business groups such as the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Institute of Directors developed a wider political role by jointly seeking to initiate dialogue between political parties to create peace and stability. Such efforts were supported by state, USA and EU organisations, leading to increased resources and a stronger voice for the business community. Since the Good Friday Agreement, business groups have increased their focus on devolved policy issues but there is evidence of overload due to extensive government consultations, demands of assembly committees and requests for advice from politicians. Business groups (with the exception of the Federation of Small Businesses) have developed a strong insider role, working closely together to build a common framework for economic growth. Beyond NI, they have expanded their focus to encompass the 'Island of Ireland' perspective. The CBI in particular has strengthened cross-border relations with the Irish Business and Employers Federation (IBEC) to focus on transport and logistics.

Farm interest groups have long focussed on sectoral and geographical enclaves in NI. Representation was divided between the Ulster Farmers Union (UFU), whose membership comprised the larger, productivist-oriented farms in the East, and the NI Agricultural Producers' Association (NIAPA), representing smaller, stewardship-oriented farms in the catholic western counties. Since 1998, while both have increased their focus on devolved legislation, relations between them remain frayed. UFU has diverged on issues such as BSE (mad-cow disease) from

its sister organisation in Britain (the National Farmers' Union) and strengthened its links with Republic of Ireland (Irish Farmers Union), European (Committee of Professional Agricultural Organisations) and international (International Federation of Agricultural Producers) bodies.

Trade unions are divided into two categories: regional branches of UK unions, which have historically looked across the water, and locally based unions that looked towards the Republic of Ireland. Although there are differences on some policy matters, such as regional pay versus national parity, unions have corroborated on a number of issues since devolution (such as opposing the 11+ exam) to pressure the devolved administration.

Professional associations have begun to shift their focus to NI since devolution, but lacking resources, they have not adapted as quickly or easily as other groups. The main focus of the Royal Colleges and medical profession is on London. Yet, organisations such as the British Medical Association (BMA) have become an important part of the health policy community, leading the campaigns for a smoking ban (Cairney, 2009). Whilst professional organisations continue to draw on best practices in other parts of the UK, they now allow for greater divergence in campaigns and strategies.

The NI voluntary sector was highly influential in policy-making prior to devolution, filling the policy gap left by political parties (McCall and Williamson 2001; Knox and Carmichael 2005). Groups organised under the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) developed close relations with civil servants and ministers. After devolution, voluntary groups concentrated their efforts on winning the support of NI Assembly politicians (MLAs), and giving evidence to assembly committees. Voluntary groups have adapted well to the new institutions, capitalising on their pre-devolution access to policy-making channels.

In addition to the creation of a new 'Celtic periphery' perspective, and reinvigorated cross-border relations with the Republic of Ireland, groups also increased their engagement with European associations. Organisations such as the NI Local Government Association, and the NI Federation of Housing Associations, have become involved in Europe-wide groups, in an effort to engage in policy learning from outside of the UK.

Cognitive frames

A territorially based collective identity is prohibited by inter-communal conflict in Northern Ireland. The creation of two polarised political communities during the Troubles – a Catholic nationalist/republican community and a Protestant unionist/loyalist community – led to two distinct sets of identities and conflicting narratives of NI (Graham and Nash 2006). There is evidence, however, that post-devolution NI has witnessed the development of a shared commitment to the broad goal of socio-economic renewal, even if the creation of a unified community remains elusive. Interest groups have begun to relinquish the UK versus all-Ireland perspectives of political change and articulate NI territorial interests in a post-devolution UK. Although there is no equivalent of the 'be Welsh' agenda, there is a realisation of specific policy problems facing NI and a search for common solutions.

Interaction

A new regional frame of reference has inspired the creation of social partnerships and policy umbrella groups at the devolved level, involving devolved government, non-departmental public

bodies (quangos), unions, charities, non-governmental associations and professional associations on both sides of the Catholic/Protestant and Irish/UK divides. These partnerships, such as the Civic Forum, have provided channels for inter-sectoral and inter-community dialogue.

Since 1998, there has been increased interaction between interest groups, both within and between different sectors. Business groups regularly meet with representatives from the public sector, voluntary sector, unions and academia under the Economic Development Forum. Education unions meet through the Northern Ireland Teaching Council to develop common positions on education policy. Professional associations such as the Chartered Society of Physiotherapists and the Royal College of Midwives share resources, information and office space. Likewise, voluntary homelessness organisations in NI, organised under an umbrella grouping, organise events and distribute jointly produced literature. Sharing resources has resulted from the weak capacity of NI branches. It is now more difficult for policy actors to 'opt out' of Northern Irish politics as they were able to do under direct rule. Instead, there has been an increasing emphasis on 'working together' to foster 'good relations' as stipulated in the consultation process *A Shared Future: Improving Relations in Northern Ireland* (OFMDFM 2003). The common theme of social and economic development provides an important basis for cooperation despite the continued polarisation of partisan politics along the unionist/republican divide.

Conclusion

Devolution has strengthened the territorial dimension of interest representation. The most clearly visible change is that groups have reorganized themselves as interlocutors with the new institutions. This has tended to take the form of a boosted territorial presence, rather than the emergence of completely new groups or breakaways from existing UK groups. All, however, have been constrained by resources and have to be selective about the fields in which they intervene, leading to a clearer demarcation of roles with UK counterparts. There was a lack of Euroscepticism among respondents in all cases but in practice a relative inattention to the European level, which tends to be left to the UK parent bodies, or to the devolved governments and assemblies. While before devolution many groups looked to Europe as a way of by-passing an unsympathetic central government, this was of less importance after 1999. There has also been a certain disillusion with the Europe of the Regions theme and a realization that the opportunities for non-state actors are limited.

The hypothesis that stronger forms of devolution will produce a stronger boundary, so that groups will be locked in, is partially confirmed. Groups in Scotland find it more difficult to circumvent devolved institutions than those in Wales or NI, and those in NE England find it easiest. Business remains mobile and well-resourced and can venue-shop. However, it has become part of the territorial policy community despite initial aloofness. Trade unions are more committed to devolution in principle, but also strongly attached to UK-wide welfare state standards, regulation and wage bargaining. The voluntary sector is most territorialized, has most to gain from devolution and is least able to venue-shop. Strong devolution has widened the policy agenda in Scotland, Wales and NI, as multiple policy sectors have to compete for attention, although policy frames do remain largely sectoral. In NE England, there is little widening of the agenda, as the institutions are focused on economic development.

Cognitive change is visible. In Scotland, the territorial frame has taken on a deeper political and economic meaning since devolution. In Wales, where it was weaker, it has strengthened, while in NE England it remains weak. In NI, the territorial frame has always been contested but there is evidence that groups are more willing to think in a NI frame where economic and social issues are concerned. There are also signs of an emerging all-Ireland frame, no longer seen as necessarily incompatible with the UK frame. The strengthening of the territorial frame does not, however, mean any weakening of the sectoral or class one so that, pace modernization theory, these are not fundamentally in contradiction. Rather, territory refracts sectoral and class representation and provides a new context for them.

There is less evidence of interaction among groups around newly-defined or re-defined policy issues. Sectors remain distinct and contacts among groups in different sectors occur via government and elected assemblies. We do not see an emerging meso-level corporatism or negotiated order. Key issues relevant to corporatist bargaining or social partnership, including taxation and labour market policy, remain the preserve of central government.

In one respect, devolution has weakened territorial communities in dividing the old territorial lobbies and they now compete within the new arenas. Groups have had difficulty in making the transition from lobbyists to policy influentials. Early expectations about devolution producing a new political consensus gave way to disillusion in the early 2000s, especially with excessive consultation. Later, a new realism emerged as groups learned to work the new system and to concentrate their efforts where they could be most effective.

We have seen a territorialization of policy communities and new forms of horizontal co-operation and competition. The new territorial policy communities, however, are open and linked at numerous points to wider arenas. Some groups need to operate at several levels, while others are confined to one. New boundaries are forming around policy communities, but they are weak. The devolved state will not emerge as the equivalent of the old integrated nation-state but we are not seeing 'regions without regionalism'. Rather the devolved territories are being reconstructed as loosely bounded spaces. There is an emerging common interest in economic development, influenced by new regionalist themes and the theme of inter-territorial competition. The internal articulation of the territories as spaces for political exchange and interest intermediation, on the other hand, is less developed and is most marked where political devolution is strongest.

We were fortunate in having, in the UK, a laboratory with four devolution models. The comparative study of interest articulation and the interaction of territory and function remains a neglected area in the literature on spatial rescaling, the new regionalism and devolution (although see Keating, Loughlin and Deschouwer, 2003). In particular we know little about how interest representation adapts to changed structures of territorial government. This is surprising, given the rise of regional or 'meso' government across western Europe and, more recently central and eastern Europe (Sharpe, 1993; Keating, 1998; Keating and Hughes, 2004). We believe that our framework would be of particular value in cases where government is decentralizing, as in Spain, Italy or, following the federal reforms in Germany. Our approach also has the potential to link this literature with that of public policy making more generally.

In this project we have stopped at the stage of interest articulation. The next step will be to examine the impact of different forms of interest representation on the policy-making process and on policy outcomes.

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ⁱ See WAG's *Making the Connections* agenda for public sector reform:

<http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/strategy/makingtheconnections/?lang=en>

ⁱⁱ The Troubles refer to a period of intense conflict in Northern Ireland involving republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations that lasted from the 1960s until the Good Friday Agreement was signed in 1998.